

in it as well as the director and the producer had seen active service until shortly before the performance—before a war-time audience and in a theater partially demolished by a recent raid with the reek of smoke and crumbling mortar still hanging about the pit. The audience flocked to the theater in a spirit of defiance. The performance in this atmosphere laid bare the very core of the classic drama which sublimated power and action and the resolute spirit of youth and manhood.

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The temporary closing of the German theaters on September 1 was a sacrifice to the stern necessities of total war. As a

substitute, the German radio has inaugurated a weekly program "The Stage at the Microphone" in which plays of every type from tragedy to farce will be broadcast in condensed form. All the leading members of the dramatic profession now engaged in the armament industry have declared their willingness to make the German public a gift of the little leisure time they have by putting themselves at the disposal of the radio.

Thus a way has been found to continue the cultivation of dramatic art and tide over these critical times until, with the restoration of peace, the theaters open their doors again and dramatic art resumes its wonted prominence in the life of the nation.

BEHIND SOVIET PRODUCTION

By B. THOMAS

The underrating of the Soviet Union's strength customary in the twenties and thirties has of late been widely replaced by an equally unrealistic overrating and a readiness to trust Soviet slogans. As a result, many people are inclined to believe the Soviet thesis that the country's production is based on the patriotism and voluntary efforts of the people. The following article subjects this thesis to scrutiny based on plentiful items supplied by the Soviet press and radio during the last few months. The author obtained this doctor's degree in economics at the University of Göttingen with a thesis on Soviet economics.—K.M.

"SOCIALIST COMPETITION"

DURING the first period after the Revolution, when the Bolsheviks still believed that the Revolution had produced a new man with a new attitude toward work, stimulating the workers by differentiated wages was rejected with indignation. In the Soviet State, it was claimed, all work would be performed not for personal gain but by reason of superior insight, just as, for example, the amateur sportsman exerts himself for love of his sport and not for the sake of any material profit. But just as the sportsman exerts himself more when he is in competition with other sportsmen, so the socialist worker was to be stimulated by competition with others to do his best. Even when the stimulation by wages later proved indispensable, the idea of socialist competition was maintained, although it lost in importance.

By spring 1942 the Soviet Union had suffered heavy blows as a result of the war and the loss of large territories, and it be-

came apparent that production could not be increased to a sufficient extent with the existing methods. Following upon Stalin's order of May 1, a gigantic movement was organized which, under the collective name of "All-Union Socialist Competition," plunged the whole country into a frenzy of competitions. These competitions, called voluntary, function something like this:

The collective of workers of one factory suggests to the collectives of other factories, usually of the same line of manufacture, that they pledge themselves to increase production, reduce manufacturing costs, save labor, etc. As every Stalin speech, revolutionary anniversary, military success, the beginning of the harvest campaign, etc., is used as an opportunity to release a wave of such competitions, they have become a permanent institution. Hardly has one competition come to an end when an appeal for a new one is voiced. In this way all productive enterprises, indeed, even colleges, scientific institutions, etc., participate in the All-Union Socialist Competition.

Competitions take place not only among various factories but also within a factory among the various departments. When this still proved insufficient, the competition was extended to the individual worker. At the meeting of the Central Council of Soviet Trade Unions early this year it was declared:

It is absolutely necessary that all male and female workers, engineers, technicians, and employees participate in socialist competition . . . Under no circumstances must there be in the plants a single workingman, a single workingwoman, who has not undertaken a concrete obligation.

And *Trud*, the organ of this Central Council, adds the following explanation (12.3.44):

The conditions in all enterprises must be such that not a single group of workers, not a single person, can keep aloof from competitions.

THE ORGANIZERS

Who is to see to such conditions being brought about?

Competition will then be completely successful, when our Party, trade union, and Comsomol organizations have managed to persuade the entire mass of workers to participate in individual competitions. (*Pravda*, 2.4.44.)

The Comsomol is particularly active in this respect, having created "Comsomol Youth Brigades" all over the country which, by their example, are to stimulate the other workers to produce more. Today there are 115,000 such brigades with some 800,000 members. Their latest achievement is the introduction of "tables of hourly production," in which not only the daily production of each worker, but even the production of every single one of his working hours is registered and compared with that of his co-workers.

Of course, the actual direction is in the hands of the Party. Each factory, indeed, each department of a factory has its own Party cell; these cells, in turn, form special "agitation collectives for the increase of production." We are told, for instance, that in the city of Khabarovsk alone there are 100 such agitation collectives of the Party with more than 1,000 individual agitators. One of their duties is

daily to publish the results of production in tables and posters, and to issue daily pamphlets with detailed results of production in all brigades and working groups. (*Radio Vladivostok*, 28.4.44.)

What we have said of industry applies also to agriculture, as the campaign for the 1944 harvest has shown. Here, too, Party and Comsomol members must create condi-

tions which make it impossible for any farm hand "to keep aloof from competition." Instructions run as follows:

The *kolkhoz* workers undertake concrete obligations for each day. The agitators note down these obligations and in the evening, together with the heads of the various work brigades, they examine the result of the work of each person and post it on the notice board. The public nature of the competition has borne excellent fruit. (*Komsomolskaya Pravda*, 10.8.44.)

The forms of agitation recommended are:

Lectures, speeches, discussions, reading aloud from newspapers, publishing of local news sheets, radio, movies, reading halls, clubs, wall bulletins, pamphlets, etc. . . . All this must not be done episodically, once or twice a week, but systematically, every day . . . By no means during working hours, but during the lunch and rest intervals, even though these are only short. (*Propagandist*, No. 13, 1944, pp. 4-7.)

AGITATION

It is apparent that the worker is to have no time to think of anything but his work and competitions. To bring about such a state of affairs a vast number of agitators is employed. The approximately 11 million members of the Comsomol and 5 million members of the Party are not enough. Moreover, the Party and Comsomol have, as a result of the war, undergone such changes in membership, ideology, and tactics that the majority of their members, especially in the rural districts, can hardly keep up with them and must, in turn, be taken care of by super-agitators. The Central Committee of the Party was forced on July 17, 1943, to pass a special resolution "On the organization of political lectures by Party and Soviet members for the rural population." During the first ten months after the decree, 3,686 agitators made 88,452 political speeches in 6,918 *kolkhozes* in Moscow Province alone (*Propagandist*, No. 11, 12, 1944, p. 26). This means that in the rural districts of Moscow Province, not counting towns and factories, an agitation speech was made on an average every five minutes during these ten months. In other parts of the USSR the demand for agitators is even greater. Some 40,000 provincial and county agitators were sent out in Gorki Province (*Propagandist*, No. 5, 1944, p. 40), 20,000 in Tambov Province (*Radio Moscow*, 9.8.44.) Hence the total number of these super-agitators in the rural districts throughout the Soviet Union is more likely to be above one million than below.

Why, in spite of the existing shortage of manpower, are such numbers mobilized during the fourth year of war for purposes

of agitation? The reply given is always more or less the same:

Where insufficient attention is paid to agitation, where the agitators are not properly instructed, where the process of work goes on without their supervision, success fails to come; for without ceaseless agitation the successful carrying out of socialist competition is impossible. (Radio Khabarovsk, 26.6.44.)

Agitation of an extent unparalleled throughout the world is an absolute essential for the functioning of Soviet economies. There is also another such essential.

PIECE-WORK WAGES

In the *kolkhozes* where no additional payment is offered for harvest-yields exceeding the plan, where there are no piece-work wages for working groups and individual workers, and where wages are paid on a collective basis—in those *kolkhozes* there can be no real competition. (*Propagandist*, No. 13, 1944, p. 5.)

So we discover that all the tremendous efforts, the spiritual and moral influence exerted on the workers, are in no way sufficient to bring about the desired production and that they must be supplemented by concrete material advantages for each *kolkhoz* worker.

A factory in Moscow Province had, in accordance with the constant urging on the part of the Government, started a vegetable farm which the factory workers were to run in order to improve their own food supplies. But neither the appeal to their social conscience nor to their collective interest could induce the workmen to work there. Thereupon the factory commission which was in charge of the farm increased the wages for field labor. The result was mass participation on the part of the workmen. However, there was still a shortage of buckets for irrigation. Now it was announced that those workers who brought their own buckets would receive a bonus of 25 per cent. And lo and behold, there were buckets in plenty.

This example is lauded by *Trud* (27.7.44) as a proof of the skillful employment of piece-work wages. And if even in a case like this—where every worker of the factory should be interested in increasing the production of foodstuffs reserved exclusively for the factory staff—the stimulus of individual piece-work wages is indispensable, this is all the more true in cases where the production goes to the state.

How completely the attempt to educate men toward a new attitude toward work has failed is revealed by the development

of agricultural wages. Immediately after the collectivization of agriculture wages were calculated according to the total harvest yield of the *kolkhoz* and distributed equally among all the members of the *kolkhoz*. But it soon turned out that with equal wages production went down considerably. So the *kolkhoz* was divided into "work brigades" and wages calculated per brigade; the result was that the individual laborers began to work a little harder. The next step was to subdivide the brigades into "work groups" (*zveno*), but even this was not sufficient. With brutal frankness, a high Party official, in an article in *Pravda* (25.8.44), attacked the system by which all the members of a work group receive the same wages based on the production of the whole group. He declared that wages should be differentiated within each group, too, as it was an "injustice" for people with a weak constitution or a mother with many children, who cannot do the same amount of work in the fields, to receive the same wages as the others; they should be paid less. And he proved with the aid of statistics that the daily production of a work group was quintupled and more when the group piece-work wages were replaced by individual piece-work wages.

In this way, the piece-work wage system, which was formerly repudiated as being the epitome of capitalist exploitation, is carried to greater extremes in the USSR than in any other country of the world. To obtain even a tiny increase in work, the Soviets must pay correspondingly higher wages. Piece-work wages represent the second absolute essential for the functioning of Soviet economies.

FORCE

The third and perhaps most powerful weapon in the struggle for production is force, which stands behind everything. Again and again it is said, although it should be a matter of course after twenty-seven years of Bolshevism:

Members of the village organizations, Comsomol members, Party members, and the workers of the machine-tractor stations must safeguard the carrying out of production. (Radio Vladivostok, 27.9.44.)

They *must* do it, whatever the cost. They *must* bring about conditions in which the workers have no choice left but to supply the production demanded from them. It was not by chance that, in an appeal during harvest time, the *Komsomolskaya Pravda* (10.8.44) reminded its readers of Kalinin's

words, in which he ferociously attacked everyone who would not carry out the work demanded from him:

A person of that kind is our enemy. The Comsomol members must pillory him, must expose him to the entire nation. If he should prove incorrigible, he must be dealt with severely.

Each and every Soviet worker and peasant must participate in the competitions and must fulfill the production plans drawn up by the Party. No explanations are accepted for their nonfulfillment. Such cases are simply denounced as sabotage and the guilty ones treated as saboteurs, deserters, and enemies of the people, "according to the laws of war."

THE PEOPLE'S PROPERTY

In the course of the harvest campaign of 1944 the Soviet population was overwhelmed with a flood of appeals and measures to safeguard the harvest against theft. From the two-pages-long "Decree for the Protection of the Harvest" in the *Pravda* (17.7.44) we learn that no handful of grain may be left even a moment unguarded and unsupervised. It has been demanded time and again that while the harvest is being cut, threshed, transported to the barns or railway—in short, during every single stage—it be weighed and checked again and again and kept under a constant guard in order to prevent its disappearance. According to Radio Moscow, 90,000 Comsomol members were needed in Odessa Province and 21,000 in Gorki Province to guard the harvest day and night from the point of its ripening up to its delivery to the state to stop the people from laying hands on the "people's property." (*Komsomolskaya Pravda*, 18.8.44.) If tens of thousands of men have to guard the fields and barns—not counting those guarding storehouses and factories in the towns—the number of those who might steal the produce must amount to hundreds of thousands in each province. This makes it clear that the protection is needed not against a few criminal elements but against a large part of the people itself.

In view of this, it is not surprising that there are ceaseless complaints about

sabotage in the grain deliveries to the state:

In some of the counties of the Maritime Province, people do not want to deliver anything to the state in spite of their having stocks of threshed grain. (Radio Vladivostok, 18.8.44.)

In those *kolkhozes* in which agitation does not function efficiently there are poor harvest results. In the *kolkhoz* "Ukraina," in which each Comsomol member was left to his own devices, no more than 57 per cent of the area was harvested. The Comsomol failed here to bring the young people under its influence. (Radio Vladivostok, 15.9.44.)

Wherever we look, it is the same: where the people are not completely and continuously under the influence of the Party and the Comsomol, where they are left the least bit to themselves, work immediately slows down and "treacherous tendencies" and "saboteurs" make their appearance. Even the members of the Comsomol do not fulfill their duties unless they are constantly driven.

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We do not by any means wish to under-rate the role of Soviet patriotism in the evolution of the USSR during the last few years. Indeed, its role has been emphasized in former articles appearing in this magazine. But the fact must not be overlooked that, to a very considerable extent, this Soviet patriotism is the result of agitation, piece-work wages, and force applied more ruthlessly than in any other country in the world. According to statements made by the Soviets themselves, the wheels of production slow down if they are not constantly impelled by a maximum of agitation, piece-work wages, and force.

If we consider that in National-Socialist Germany, in spite of millions of non-German laborers and the most violent bombing attacks, and in capitalist America and England, a gigantic production is being achieved with a minimum of such methods—partly through ordinary working discipline, partly through a common spirit of self-sacrifice—then the Moscow thesis of the patriotism of the Soviet masses manifesting itself in an enthusiasm for work and in voluntary competitions appears in a different light.

Truth Will Out

In California a psychiatric patient was asked if he were Napoleon. He craftily said "No." A lie detector showed he was lying.